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June 15, 1994

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JUN 15 1994

FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY

BY HAND DELIVERY

Mr. William F. Caton
Acting Secretary
Federal Communications Commission
Room 222
1919 M Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20554

Dear Mr. Caton:

Re: En Banc Hearing on Children's Television
(MM Docket No. 93-48), June 28, 1994

Dear Mr. Caton:

In connection with the appearances at the Commission's June 28, 1994 en banc children's television hearing of David V.B. Britt, President and Chief Executive Officer of Children's Television Workshop ("CTW"), and Sheldon Turnipseed, who plays Jamal Jenkins in CTW's Ghostwriter, I am enclosing an original and nine copies of Mr. Britt's and Mr. Turnipseed's prepared remarks, along with a summary of their testimony, speaker biographies, and a brief description of CTW.

By copy of this letter, I am submitting 21 copies of the same materials to the Video Services Division.

Very truly yours,

Barbara K. Gardner

Barbara K. Gardner

Enclosures

cc: Mr. Larry A. Miller (By Hand)

No. of Copies rec'd
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**EN BANC HEARING ON CHILDREN'S TELEVISION
FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
(MM Docket No. 93-48)**

Testimony of **David V. B. Britt**
 President/Chief Executive Officer
 Children's Television Workshop

and

Sheldon Turnipseed
Actor, GHOSTWRITER

June 28, 1994

Members of the Commission, distinguished fellow panelists, ladies and gentlemen, good morning. I'm David Britt, President and CEO of Children's Television Workshop, producers of *Sesame Street*, *Ghostwriter*, *Cro*, and other educational, innovative media for children and their families.

I'm here with my young colleague, Sheldon Turnipseed, to urge the Commission to take action on behalf of our nation's children -- to put into clear practice the protections Congress afforded our nation's youngest citizens with the overwhelming passage of the Children's Television Act of 1990. The first step in this prodigious process is to clarify, once and for all, the definition of educational/informational television under the Act.

As the largest single teacher of young children in this country, we've struggled with this same task. We take seriously our obligations to the more than 10 million children watching *Sesame Street* on an average month, the 9 million reading our magazines, and the millions more enjoying our books and videos, participating in our outreach programs, using our materials in schools, watching *Ghostwriter* and *Cro*, and purchasing our products.

Our responsibilities have led us to a workable definition of educational television, a process and a practice that is at once economical and effective. I want to use my short time before you to examine these practical guidelines and urge the Commission to embrace them -- to adopt a straightforward approach that aspires to ensure quality without regulating content, that avoids implicit censorship, and that will take us as a nation far beyond "knowing it when we see it" to viable, verifiable standards for children's educational TV.

Simply put, to qualify as "specifically designed" for children, programming must first, be developed with the assistance of independent educational advisors; second, be created to fulfill explicit written educational goals; and third, be evaluated for effectiveness.

Before examining each prong of the three-part standard, let me emphasize that the core of this approach is serious work, seriously done -- performance based on effort and good faith intent, and public interest protected by public scrutiny of results.

The first criterion of the standard centers on using independent educational advisors to inform proposed programming. Just as we seek consultants to advise us on any number of issues outside our immediate purview, so too should we seek teachers and child development professionals to advise us about the academic and developmental needs of children. As to the charge that independent authorities are too expensive for local broadcasters -- hogwash. Local elementary school teachers and college professors can be, and often are, effective advisors, and in fact, the record shows a growing number of producers and broadcasters already use this approach to advantage.

The second criterion, that programming be created to fulfill explicit written educational goals, again involves a deliberate, thoughtful process. It is this process of defining what is to be accomplished, this act of delineating the cognitive and affective purposes of programming, that creates a consciousness about the ways television can best meet children's needs. We don't mean to imply that these goal statements be lengthy or protracted; only that at a minimum, they identify the target audience and the specific skills, information, or attitudes to be imparted. Importantly, the goal statement should be placed in the Public Inspection File

of each broadcasting station to form the basis upon which the Commission and the public can measure effectiveness. Without it, there can be no impartial arbiter of success.

Finally, the third criterion stipulates that programs be evaluated for effectiveness. Again, we don't pretend to prescribe the nature or style of evaluation, only that it state, in writing, who carried it out, what methodology and assumptions were used, and what findings resulted.

Like the goal statement, a copy should be placed in the Public Inspection File, and also like the goal statement, it need not be elaborate or complex, but undertaken in good faith. In fact, because we want to encourage innovation, we believe that stations should get full credit for programming even if educational goals are not fully achieved. What is important is an improving trend, an open and visible record of serious compliance over time.

This process of support, intent, and evaluation, coupled with an increase in the amount of qualifying programming broadcast,* will go a long way to provide substantial, constructive alternatives to mindless entertainment or worse. Importantly, our proposed "content-neutral" approach doesn't seek to regulate what to teach or how; rather, it provides incentives to clearly identify and measure an informed educational intent.

* Although the time allotted to our testimony this morning requires that we focus on defining educational programming, we nonetheless want to go on record that CTW believes that the amount of core programming currently aired must be expanded. Specifically, while we know of no scientific calculation to determine the precise amount of appropriate children's educational programming, we suggest the following concrete minimum: the greater of three unduplicated hours per week or ten percent of the total weekly amount of non-qualifying standard-length children's programming typically aired by the station. This ten percent standard should be incrementally increased to twenty-five percent over the next three to five years.

Whether we like it or not, whether we approve of it or not, television is a central influence in our children's lives. As we contemplate this new 500-plus channel universe, we must take action to ensure that all children have regular access to programming that respects their intelligence, helps them learn, and approaches education as a vital, lifelong pursuit. We therefore urge the FCC to use the authority entrusted to it by Congress to adopt guidelines to define children's educational television. By so doing, the Commission will indeed foster television's unrealized potential to inform and educate our youngest citizens, now and for generations to come.

(Thank you. Let me turn your attention to the comments of my young talented colleague, Sheldon Turnipseed.)

Members of the Commission, distinguished fellow panelists, ladies and gentlemen, I'm Sheldon Turnipseed, I play Jamal on the weekly suspense series designed to help children read and write with increased skill, confidence, and enjoyment, *Ghostwriter*. I'm an actor but I don't live in Beverly Hills, I live in Crown Heights, Brooklyn. *Ghostwriter* isn't filmed in Hollywood, it's filmed on location in New York City. So while my frame of reference is of course *Ghostwriter*, it's also that of an urban teenager.

I want to echo Mr. Britt's point, about television's potential to educate -- and by educate, I mean more that numbers and letters, more that science and math, more than shapes and colors. I mean the social messages television conveys -- or more accurately perhaps, doesn't convey -- the context and the consequences of actions in every day life.

Most kids' shows portray life too perfectly -- it's not a big deal when a kid does something right, and in much the same way, it's not a big deal when he does something wrong. Everything is solved neatly in a half-hour. All is somehow forgiven -- a happy, seamless ending, a pretty package with a bow. Real life isn't like this. Try as we may, violence will find us; turmoil will find us. Kids need and want shows to make us think. We don't want our intelligence insulted and we don't want to be patronized. We have difficult choices. We need more shows like *Ghostwriter* that model the building blocks of decision-making, not bullets; that model a multicultural cast working in harmony, not hatred; that model reading and writing as integral to daily life, not incidental.

It is our social education that will make us more responsible and caring citizens. In this spirit, I too, urge the Commission to adopt CTW's guidelines for defining children's educational television and make a difference in our daily lives.

Summary of David V. B. Britt's Testimony Before the Federal Communications Commission's En Banc Hearing On Children's Television

David V.B. Britt, President and Chief Executive Officer of Children's Television Workshop (CTW), urges the Federal Communications Commission to adopt a three-part standard to define "educational and informational" children's programming under the Children's Television Act of 1990. Specifically, qualifying programming must first, be produced with the assistance of educational advisors; second, be created to fulfill explicit written educational goals; and finally, be evaluated for effectiveness. At the core of this approach is serious work, seriously done -- performance based on effort and good faith intent, and public interest protected by public scrutiny of results. Data generated throughout the process should be placed in the broadcasting station's Public Inspection File to enable the public and the Commission to assess whether the producer has proceeded thoughtfully and in good faith to craft a program designed to educate and inform children. This content-neutral process of support, intent and evaluation will foster television's unrealized potential to inform and educate the nation's youngest citizens.

**Summary of Sheldon Turnipseed's Testimony Before the Federal Communications
Commission's En Banc Hearing On Children's Television**

Sheldon Turnipseed, actor in Children's Television Workshop's (CTW) *Ghostwriter* series, designed to help children read and write with increased skill, confidence and enjoyment, urges the Commission to adopt the definition of "educational and informational" children's programming proposed by CTW. In order to meet the challenge of educating children, broadcasters must resist the pat and patronizing programming that masquerades as "educational." The real challenge is to convey positive social messages that offer kids models for living in an increasingly difficult and complicated world.



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BIO SKETCH: DAVID V.B. BRITT

David V.B. Britt, president-chief executive officer of Children's Television Workshop (CTW), joined the company in 1971 as assistant director of a CTW project that explored the feasibility of service-oriented urban cable television systems. In 1974, when Britt was named vice president of corporate development for the Workshop, and special assistant to Joan Ganz Cooney, CTW co-founder, he managed policy coordination of the Workshop's various activities. In 1979, Britt was appointed senior vice president, where he was responsible for corporate relations and oversaw CTW's research, outreach and public affairs functions, as well as finance, legal, personnel and administration activities. Britt became executive vice president in 1982, chief operating officer in 1988 and was appointed to his current position in 1990.

Britt began his career with the Northern Trust Company in Chicago. Subsequently he held positions with the United States government, including chief of the legislative presentation staff at the U.S. Agency for International Development. Other government positions included senior planning officer of the Overseas Private Investment Corporation and director of program and plans of the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission.

Britt received a 1991 President's Award from the Graduate School and University Center of the City University of New York. He is currently a trustee of Children's Television Workshop and the National Council on Health Education.

In 1993, Britt was elected to serve as the first Chairman of the Board of Governors for the American Center for Children's Television, an organization promoting excellence in television programming for America's children.

He received his B.A. degree from Wesleyan University in Connecticut and a Master of Public Administration from Harvard University.

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SHELDON TURNIPSEED ("JAMAL") - Sheldon hails from Brooklyn, NY and is a junior at the Bronx High School of Science. Sheldon's favorite school subjects are English, art and architectural drafting. He is currently writing sci-fi/adventure stories dealing with government corruption and politicians. A fan of action-adventure movies and a talented sketch artist, Sheldon is also an enthusiastic karate practitioner and enjoys skiing.

Sheldon's favorite authors are Ernest Hemingway and Arthur C. Clarke. His favorite books are King Arthur and His Knights and Rendezvous with Rama. He also enjoys checking out the latest issues of Essence magazine, and his favorite comic book is Spawn. He is an avid Star Trek fan.

Mrs. Turnipseed remarks that Sheldon begged her to let him act at the age of six after he saw a story about child actors on TV. He has since appeared in the films Mo' Better Blues, Jungle Fever and Cadillac Man. His favorite actors include Robert DeNiro, Denzel Washington and Bill Cosby--whom he respects as a businessman as well as an actor.

An all-American sports fan, Sheldon enjoys all sports related to speed--including track, cycling and skiing. He follows college sports as well, and is a fan of UNLV, the Georgetown Hoyas, the Miami Hurricanes and the Duke Blue Devils.

Sheldon names a few of his favorite hobbies (next to reading, naturally) as writing stories and listening to music--the latter being no surprise since he loves all rap and R&B groups. His favorite musicians are Sade and Branford Marsalis.

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Description of Children's Television Workshop

Children's Television Workshop was founded in 1968 to utilize television to help children learn. Today, the not-for-profit company has grown into a multimedia educational institution encompassing television, home video, publishing, software and community outreach efforts. In addition to *Sesame Street*, CTW currently produces *Ghostwriter* and *Cro*. CTW programming helps educate children in nearly 100 countries around the world.